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OFFICE IMAGING PRODUCTS 2004: BLI'S PICKS OF THE YEAR

During the testing period for this year's awards, which ran from the summer of 2003 to the late spring of 2004, more than 130 multifunctional products, fax machines and printers were subjected to BLI's rigorous in-house evaluation. The battery of tests includes an extensive durability test during which each unit is run at the manufacturer's maximum recommended monthly volume. In addition to assessing reliability, the tests are designed to evaluate such critical factors as misfeed frequency, copy and print quality, copy and print productivity, ease of use and economy, as well as connectivity issues such as feedback to workstations, administrative utilities, print drivers and multitasking.

As is the case every year, some models performed below the bar in one or more areas, while others clearly excelled. While many products performed well this past year, a number stood out from the rest as clearly superior to their competition. Twice each year, with its "Pick of the Year" awards, BLI gives special recognition in each category to the products that provided the most outstanding performances in the laboratory (of course, only units tested by BLI are eligible to receive awards). The purpose of these awards is to better guide equipment buyers in their acquisition decisions.

Among the winners is...

Sharp Document Solutions Company Of America *Outstanding Multifunctional Imaging Device Scan Solution, Spring 2004*

Sharp Document Solutions Company of America
Sharp Plaza
Mahwah, NJ 07430
800-237-4277
www.sharp-usa.com



Having conducted extensive laboratory testing of the scan solutions offered by nearly every vendor in the multifunctional document imaging device industry, BLI has singled out the scan solution offered by Sharp as the best and, therefore, acknowledges Sharp Document Solutions Company of America with an "Outstanding Achievement Award" for "Outstanding Multifunctional Imaging Device Scan Solution." While each of BLI's test technicians has experience with the scan solutions of many different vendors, Sharp's ImageSend solution, used in conjunction with Sharpdesk, was the unanimous choice for this award among the technicians.

Of all the functions offered by multifunctional products, the scan function is usually the most problematic to set up and the most time-consuming and labor-intensive to test, of-

ten requiring hours of wading through documentation. In contrast, Sharp's scan solution is very simple to set up and use. The optional network scanner expansion kit provides Sharp IMAGERS with integrated scanning to e-mail destinations, Internet fax destinations, FTP servers, users' desktops or fax destinations (if the IMAGER is equipped with fax). Noted BLI Supervisor of Lab Operations Pete Emory, "Sharp's scan solution is very easy to install—a manual is not even needed. Everything needed is contained on one CD-ROM and the procedure is very automated. Some systems require an administrator to load multiple programs and locate IP addresses."

In addition to being easy to set up for scanning on the network, the Sharp scan solution makes the programming of destinations (accomplished from the Web utility), which automatically upload to the device and appear as selectable choices on the control panel, a simple task for end users. In contrast, with many other scan solutions, the setup of destinations and templates for scanning is a complicated procedure best left to an administrator. And, of course, with LDAP support, there's no need to program e-mail addresses that already reside on a corporate mail server, as these addresses can be accessed directly from the control panel of the IMAGER.

In addition to its superior ease of use, Sharp's scan solution offers good functionality. For example, unlike with some vendors' scan solutions, which require users to retrieve their scanned images from shared folders, Sharp's ImageSend allows sending of scanned images directly to the desktops of users on the network. The scan option comes with Sharpdesk software, which enables users on the network to receive scans and to work with and edit scanned documents with features such as OCR, zoom, remove dots, auto straighten, auto trim, sharpness adjust-

ment, rotate, touch-up filters and stamping. Users can be alerted to received scans by a prompt or can choose to have Sharpdesk open automatically when a scanned image is received. The software also incorporates document management features such as sorting of images according to various parameters and combining of files of different types into a single document. "Sharp's scan solution is not only very easy to set up and use, but it gives you everything you need to archive, edit and export files using simple drag-and-drop procedures," said Emory.

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